

11/17/13

Gideon, The Broken Vessel
Judges 7:1-25

The odds of America winning the Revolutionary War against England were greatly against America, yet the testimony of George Washington, Jefferson and others was that God interveined

Gideon has been commissioned by God to defeat the Midianites with the absolute certainty of sure victory. Judges 6

Now God is going to communicate to Gideon the conditions for the victorious defeat of the Midianites, which is three-fold: Judges 7:1-25

- I. God would choose the men for battle. vs. 1-8
- II. God would make Gideon courageous for the battle. vs. 9-15a-c
- III. God would provide the plan for battle. vs. 15d-25

I. God would choose the men for battle. vs. 1-8

- A. The first phase for choosing the fighting men. vs. 1-3
 - 1. The army of Gideon prepared themselves for the battle. vs. 1
 - * “Then Jerubbaal (that *is*, Gideon) and all the people who *were* with him rose

early and encamped beside the well of Harod, so that the camp of the Midianites was on the north side of them by the hill of Moreh in the valley.”

- a. Gideon is called Jerubbaal, let Baal contend, given to him by his father for his courageous destruction of the altar of Baal. Judges 6:27-32
 - b. Gideon and all the people arose early and encamped besides the well of Harod. vs. 1a
 - 1) The people were Manassah, Asher, Zebulun and Naphtali, on the north of I. Judges 6:35
 - 2) The well of Harod was located at Mount Gilead at the north end of Mount Gilboa. vs. 3d
 - c. The Midianites were encamped on the north of them by the hill of Moreh, in the Valley. vs. 1b
 - * About 4_miles distance.
2. The number of fighting men that show up was objected to by God. vs. 2
- a. The proclamation was not natural, “And the LORD said to Gideon, “The people who *are* with you *are* too many for Me to give the Midianites into their hands.” vs. 2a
 - 1) Most commanding Generals would welcome every fighting man, but not God

- 2) Most would complain about being outnumbered, even with 32,000 men, they were outnumbered 4 to 1, The Midianites having 135,000.
- b. The objection was very natural, “lest Israel claim glory for itself against Me, saying, ‘My own hand has saved me.’ vs. 2b-d
 - 1) The covenant God was telling Gideon that Israel would take the credit for the great victory.
 - 2) This is not an exaggeration, but rather the truth of what God saw in the hearts of the 32,000 men.
- 3. The number of fighting men was reduced by the provision God gave in the Law regarding going to war. vs. 3
 - a. The provision regarded the cowardly, “Now therefore, proclaim in the hearing of the people, saying, ‘Whoever *is* fearful and afraid, let him turn and depart at once from Mount Gilead.’” vs. 3a-e
 - 1) The provision included those who planted a vinyard and not partaken of it and betroth to a woman and not yet married. Deut. 20:6, 7
 - 2) The provision for the cowardly had a very common sense reason, lest the coward in battle discourage other to fight and flee. Deut. 20:8

- b. The provision in the Law thinned down the number of fighting men, “And twenty-two thousand of the people returned, and ten thousand remained.” vs. 3f-g
 - 1) Two thirds of weakness was gone.
 - 2) The remaining third were 100% strong for the battle.
- B. The second phase for choosing the men for battle. vs. 4-8
 - 1. The 10,000 fighting men was objected to by God. vs. 4
 - a. The covenant God Yahweh could still see the proud heart of Israel with the 10,000 fighting men, He needed to thin them down further. vs. 4a-d
 - 1) The One in command is always God, “But the LORD said to Gideon, “The people *are* still *too* many.” vs. 4-b
 - 2) The One who tests men is God, “bring them down to the water, and I will test them for you there”, like a smith refining gold. vs. 4a-d
 - b. The covenant God Yahweh would choose the final number of fighting men to go out to battle. vs. 4e-k
 - 1) God is the One who approves men, “Then it will be, *that* of whom I say to you, ‘This one shall go with

- you,' the same shall go with you.”
vs. 4e-g
- 2) God is the One who rejects men,
 “and of whomever I say to you,
 ‘This one shall not go with you,’
 the same shall not go.” vs. 4e-k
2. The number of fighting men were taken
 to the water for God to test. vs. 5-6
- a. God instructed Gideon to place the
 men in two groups, “So he brought
 the people down to the water. And the
 LORD said to Gideon, “Everyone
 who laps from the water with his
 tongue, as a dog laps, you shall set
 apart by himself; likewise everyone
 who gets down on his knees to drink.”
vs. 5
- b. God demonstrated a clear separation,
 “And the number of those who
 lapped, *putting* their hand to their
 mouth, was three hundred men; but all
 the rest of the people got down on
 their knees to drink water.” vs. 6
- 1) Many say it was because they were
 more alert, but the text does not
 say this, at all.
- 2) The testing was of faith, not human
 ability or vigilance.
3. The number of fighting men were
 commissioned by God. vs. 7-8
- a. The covenant God Yahweh, gave the
 order, “Then the LORD said to

- Gideon, “By the three hundred men
 who lapped I will save you, and
 deliver the Midianites into your hand,
 being men of faith. vs. 7a-c
- b. The covenant God release the 9,700
 of their duty for battle, not being men
 of faith, “Let all the *other* people go,
 every man to his place.” vs. 7d-e
- c. The covenant God Yahweh,
 confirmed the faith of the 300. vs. 8
- 1) The 300 were prepared for battle,
 “So the people took provisions and
 their trumpets in their hands”, not
 swords and spears. vs. 8a
- 2) The 300 did not complain or feared
 at the leaving of the 9,700, their
 faith was in God, “And he sent
 away all *the rest of* Israel, every
 man to his tent, and retained those
 three hundred men.” vs. 8b-d
 * The swift reduction occurred
 before the camp of the enemy!
- 3) The 300 looked out from the high
 ground advantage, “Now the camp
 of Midian was below him in the
 valley.” vs. 8e
 * Johanthan told his armor bearer,
 “For nothing restrains the LORD
 from saving by many or by few.”
1Sam. 14:6

Illustration

“Some *trust* in **chariots**, and some in horses; But we will remember the name of the LORD our God.” Ps. 20:7

Application

1. The confidence of man is always in their great numbers and abilities, the arm of flesh.
 - a. They tell you how much God is in thier ministry and how many people they have reached and saved.
 - b. They tell you how they have sacrificed and suffered for Christ, in order to tell you how effective they are, taking the glory.
 - d. Then they turn around and tell you how they need your financial help, a contradiction and robbing God of His glory!
 - 1) King Hezekiah was marvolously help by God till he became strong and his heart was lifted up to his own destruction. 2Chron. 26:15-16
 - 2) “I *am* the LORD, that *is* My name; And **My glory** I will not give to another, Nor My praise to carved images.” Isa 42:8
 - 3) “For you see your calling, brethren, that not many wise according to the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, *are called*. But God has chosen the foolish things of the world to put to shame the wise, and God has chosen the weak things of the world to put to shame the things which are mighty; and the base things of the world and the things which

are despised God has chosen, and the things which are not, to bring to nothing the things that are, that no flesh should glory in His presence. But of Him you are in Christ Jesus, who became for us wisdom from God--and righteousness and sanctification and redemption-- that, as it is written, “He who glories, let him glory in the LORD.” 1Cor. 1:26-31

2. The calling and approving of men and women for service is always based on the Word of God.
 - a. We are told not to put a person in the work of God who is a novice.
 - * “not a novice, lest being puffed up with **pride** he fall into the *same* condemnation as the devil.” 1Tim. 3:6
 - b. We are told not to put a person in the work of God who is not godly in character or does not have his house in order.
 - * “This *is* a faithful saying: If a man desires the position of a bishop, he desires a good work. A bishop then must be blameless, the husband of one wife, temperate, sober-minded, of good behavior, hospitable, able to teach; not given to wine, not violent, not greedy for money, but gentle, not quarrelsome, not covetous; one who rules his own house well, having *his* children in submission with all reverence (for if a man does not know how to rule his own house, how

will he take care of the church of God?)
1Tim. 3:1-5

- c. We are told not to put a person in the work of God who does not have the spiritual gifts required. Rom. 12; 1Cor. 12-14; 1Pet. 4:10
 * Yet people will get mad at us, object or tell us we are too self-righteous and legalistic, when we point to the word of God as our instruction manual for service or removal from service!

- 3. The work of God can only be done with the people of faith that God will bring up and choose.
 - a. It is a great mistake to look to and depend on numbers for the work of God.
 - 1) “But without **faith** *it is* impossible to please *Him*, for he who comes to God must believe that He is, and *that* He is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him.” Heb. 11:6
 - 2) God reduced us down from 500 to 300 in in Alhambra, in order to give us this building in Pasadena, in 1986!
 - b. It is the failure of Pastors to put people in ministry because they are their friends, they need to fill a spot or are big financial donors, they have no business in ministry!
 - c. It is the glory of God to trust God for the people He raises up for ministry from within the church body.
 - * “Not that we are **sufficient** of ourselves to think of anything as *being* from ourselves, but our sufficiency *is* from

God, who also made us **sufficient** as ministers of the new covenant, not of the letter but of the Spirit; for the letter kills, but the Spirit gives life.” 2Cor. 3:5-6

The condition for Gideon to defeat the Midianites was that God would choose the men for battle!

II. God would make Gideon courageous for battle. vs. 9-15a-c

- A. God prepared Gideon personally for the victory. vs. 9-11a-b
 - 1. Gideon was instructed to go down into the camp of the Midianites. vs. 9
 - a. This was a command, a military order from the Captain of the armies of heaven, “It happened on the same night that the LORD said to him, “Arise, go down against the camp.” vs. 9a-c
 - 1) It took place the very night the 9,700 were released from duty.
 - 2) It was his first orders for battle.
 - b. This was a step of faith, believing God the battle had already been won, “for I have delivered it into your hand.” vs. 9d
 - 1) Then the LORD turned to him and said, “Go in this might of yours, and you shall save Israel from the

- hand of the Midianites. Have I not sent you?" Judges 6:14
- 2) "Surely I will be with you, and you shall defeat the Midianites as one man." Judges 6:16
 - 3) "But the Spirit of the LORD came upon Gideon; then he blew the trumpet, and the Abiezrites gathered behind him." Judges 6:34
2. Gideon was sent on a reconnaissance mission that he have full confidence in God for the battle. vs. 10-11b
 - a. God knew his fear, so He gave him an option, "But if you are afraid to go down, go down to the camp with Purah your servant." vs. 10
 - * "Though one may be overpowered by another, **two** can withstand him. And a threefold cord is not quickly broken." Eccl. 4:12
 - b. God revealed that the recon information would remove his fear and doubt, causing his faith in God to grow for the victory, "and you shall hear what they say; and afterward your hands shall be strengthened to go down against the camp." vs. 11a-b
 - * The word strengthen "chazaq", means to be firm, bold and courageous.

- B. God confirmed to Gideon personally the victory. vs. 12-15c
 1. The situation was intimidating. vs. 12
 - a. The confederated enemies were ready, "Now the Midianites and Amalekites, all the people of the East, were lying in the valley." vs. 12a-c
 - b. The odds were against Israel, "as numerous as locusts; and their camels *were* without number, as the sand by the seashore in multitude." vs. 12c-e
 - * The Medianites had 135, 000, 450 to 1. Judges 8:10
 2. The intelligence gathered was valuable. vs. 13-14
 - a. God had given a dream to one of the enemy soldiers about the battle, "And when Gideon had come, there was a man telling a dream to his companion. He said, "I have had a dream: *To my surprise*, a loaf of barley bread tumbled into the camp of Midian; it came to a tent and struck it so that it fell and overturned, and the tent collapsed." vs. 13
 - * God gave Nebuchadnezzar a dream of the kingdoms of the world for the "Time of the Gentiles". Dan. 2
 - b. God gave the interpretation to another soldier about Gideon's victory, "Then his companion answered and said,

“This *is* nothing else but the sword of Gideon the son of Joash, a man of Israel! Into his hand God has delivered Midian and the whole camp.” vs. 14

* God revealed the secret to Daniel in a night vision, so Daniel blessed the God of heaven. Dan. 2:19

- c. God was worshipped by Gideon, “And so it was, when Gideon heard the telling of the dream and its interpretation, that he worshiped.” vs. 15a-c

* The word worshipped “shachah” means to bow down, to prostrate oneself, before a superior.

Illustration

When the Sryian had surrounded the house of Elisha at Dothan, his servant concluded they were dead, “So he answered, “Do not fear, for those who *are* with us *are* more than those who *are* with them. And Elisha prayed, and said, “LORD, I pray, open his eyes that he may see.” Then the LORD opened the eyes of the young man, and he saw. And behold, the mountain *was* full of horses and chariots of fire all around Elisha.” 2Kings 6:16-17

Application

1. God prepares each of us for all the things He has for our lives, no different than Gideon.

- a. The Lord Jesus calls us to obey in faith, be it in our single or married life to live according to his word.

1) Sometimes the situation is intimidating or emotionally overwhelming, due to the fact that it involves a family member, but it is to increase our faith in God, not ourselves!

2) “For God has not given us a spirit of **fear**, but of power and of love and of a sound mind.” 2Tim. 1:7

- b. The Lord Jesus instructs us each to obey His word completely for the victory over the situation.

* If we compromise obedience to the word, the victory will be complicated, delayed or at times not take place! 1Sam. 15:22

- c. The Lord Jesus will guide us specifically for our own custom-made course in life, we can not copy others, God will speak to you.

* “Grace and peace be multiplied to you in the knowledge of God and of Jesus our Lord, as His divine power has given to us all things that *pertain* to life and godliness, through the knowledge of Him who called us by glory and virtue, by which have been given to us exceedingly great and precious promises, that through these you may be partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption *that is* in the world through lust.” 2Pet. 1:2-4

2. The courage for the situations of our life will always depend on our own commitment to walk in fellowship with God, to hear the voice of God to confirm His direction and guidance.

- a. Spending time with Jesus in prayer and constantly expecting for Him to speak to me, throughout the day.
- b. Spending time in the word of God to judge all things by His word.
- c. Resisting every time I want to be swayed by my emotions or my own understanding to resolve the situation or circumstance in disobedience to the word of God.
- d. Relying on the power of the Holy Spirit for all things.
 - 1) “There is a **way** that seems right to a man, But its end is the **way** of **death**.” Prov. 14:12
 - 2) “Trust in the LORD with all your heart, And lean not on your own understanding; In all your ways acknowledge Him, And He shall direct your paths. Do not be wise in your own eyes; Fear the LORD and depart from evil. It will be health to your flesh, And strength to your bones.” Prov. 3:5-8
 - 3) “And He said to me, “My grace is sufficient for you, for My strength is made perfect in weakness.” Therefore most gladly I will rather boast in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me.” 2Cor. 12:9

The condition for Gideon to defeat the Midianites was to make him courageous for battle!

III. God would provide the plan for battle. vs. 15d-25

- A. Gideon commanded the method of attack for the battle. vs. 15d-18
 1. He affirmed the victory. vs. 15d-g
 - * Gideon returned to exhort the 300 to be courageous by the very words he had heard, “He returned to the camp of Israel, and said, “Arise, for the LORD has delivered the camp of Midian into your hand.” vs. 15d-g
 2. He prepared his army in an unusual manner. vs. 16
 - a. Placing them in three different locations, “Then he divided the three hundred men *into* three companies.” vs. 16a
 - b. Equipping them with strange weapons, “and he put a trumpet into every man’s hand, with empty pitchers, and torches inside the pitchers.” vs. 16b-c
 - c. Instructing them with their orders. vs. 17-18
 - 1) They were to follow his lead, “And he said to them, “Look at me and do likewise; watch, and when I

come to the edge of the camp you shall do as I do.” vs. 17

- 2) They were to act on his signal, “When I blow the trumpet, I and all who *are* with me, then you also blow the trumpets on every side of the whole camp, and say, ‘*The sword of the LORD and of Gideon!*’” vs. 18

B. Gideon and his army obeyed the method of attack for the battle. vs. 19-23

1. The first company of 100 approached the closest boundary at the camp of the enemy. vs. 19
 - a. Gideon led the attack, “So Gideon and the hundred men who *were* with him came to the outpost of the camp at the beginning of the middle watch, just as they had posted the watch.” vs. 19a-b
 - b. Gideon gave the signal catching the enemy by surprise, “and they blew the trumpets and broke the pitchers that *were* in their hands.” vs. 19c
2. The second and third company did the same at Gideon’s signal. vs. 20
 - a. There was a sudden alarm of the trumpet, shattering of pottery, bright lights and unified shout of victory, “Then the three companies blew the trumpets and broke the pitchers--they held the torches in their left hands and

the trumpets in their right hands for blowing--and they cried, “The sword of the LORD and of Gideon!” vs. 20

- b. The natural affect was sudden fear and disorientation, “And every man stood in his place all around the camp; and the whole army ran and cried out and fled.” vs. 21
 - c. The Supper-natural affect was to kill each other, as the fled, “When the three hundred blew the trumpets, the LORD set every man’s sword against his companion throughout the whole camp; and the army fled to Beth Acacia, toward Zererah, as far as the border of Abel Meholah, by Tabbath.” vs. 22
 - d. The 300 chased after the enemy, “And the men of Israel gathered together from Naphtali, Asher, and all Manasseh, and pursued the Midianites.” vs. 23
- C.** Gideon called for Ephraim to Join in the attack of the battle. vs. 24-25
1. He call for them to secure the enemies water sources. vs. 24
 - a. Ephraim was one of the leading tribes, “Then Gideon sent messengers throughout all the mountains of Ephraim, saying, “Come down against the Midianites, and seize from

them the watering places as far as Beth Barah and the Jordan.” Then all the men of Ephraim gathered together and seized the watering places as far as Beth Barah and the Jordan.” vs. 24

- b. Ephraim apprehended and killed the generals of the Midianites, “And they captured two princes of the Midianites, Oreb “raven” and Zeeb “wolf”. They killed Oreb at the rock of Oreb, and Zeeb they killed at the winepress of Zeeb.” vs. 25a-d
- c. Ephraim presented Gideon with the two heads on the east side of the Jordan, “They pursued Midian and brought the heads of Oreb and Zeeb to Gideon on the other side of the Jordan.” vs. 25e

Illustration

How often have people attempted to do something without God’s direction only to fail or worst yet make it work and then having to maintain the work. But what a difference when God gives the vision and plan and He blesses it!

Application

1. God uses man as an instrument, but it is God who does the work.
 - a. Man sees the victory of God come about, but it is always due to the plan and power of God.

2. The typology in the story should not be missed, as Paul reminds us that God has placed a treasure in earthen vessels, Himself, that the excellence of the power may be of God and not of us. 2Cor. 4:7

- a. The key to see God work is to break the earthen vessel, in order that the light of God be seen by those in the world, not self, resulting in the work of God’s power.
 - b. Don’t miss the order of what was shouted, “the sword of the LORD and of Gideon”, the LORD Yahweh is first and second is Gideon, the instrument!
3. The common sense lessons from Gideon’s account for victory to avoid defeat.
- a. The call of God regarding the plan of God will be confirmed by God in His word, the open doors and provisions.
 - b. God will strengthen and cloth the person called with His Holy Spirit for the task.
 - c. The secret to victory is in godly leader of faith that God has called, that in the breaking of the vessel, the light of God can be seen.

The condition for Gideon to defeat the Midianites was for God to provide the plan for battle!

Conclusion

God communicated to Gideon the conditions for the victorious defeat of the Midianites:

- I.** The condition for Gideon to defeat the Midianites was that God would choose the men for battle!
- II.** The condition for Gideon to defeat the Midianites was to make him courageous for battle!
- III.** The condition for Gideon to defeat the Midianites was for God to provide the plan for battle!